

Page 4, before the paragraph beginning on line 24, insert the following

heading:

C5

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION:

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 29 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Please amend the claims to read as follows.

C6

1. (Amended) ~~Apparatus for unloading containers for rod-like articles, comprising:~~
a carrier for receiving a full container in a receiving position in a first orientation; and
means for moving the carrier to an unloading position at which the carrier is in a second orientation, the moving means including means for translating the carrier and means for rotating the carrier, wherein the translating means and rotating means are independently controlled and are adapted to operate concurrently.

C7

11. (Amended) ~~Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least one of the translating means and the rotating means includes means for moving the carrier to a preferred position following a stoppage of said apparatus.~~

C8

13. (Amended) ~~Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, said means for moving the carrier to an unloading position being configured such that said articles are unloaded through an open end of said container, and further comprising means for conveying~~

C8 unloaded articles away from the unloading position along a path, wherein the conveying means extend substantially across said open end at said unloading position except at said path.

C9 20. (Amended) Apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein the transition between said first and second phases takes place dependent on a signal from detector means sensing the presence of adjacent articles in or from an unloading container.

21. (Amended) Apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein the conveying means includes first conveyor means immediately adjacent the unloading container and second conveyor means downstream of said first conveyor means for conveying away a multi-layer stream of articles.

Please add the following new claims to the application:

C10 --30. Apparatus for unloading open-top containers of rod-like articles, said apparatus comprising:
a plurality of slideways comprising linear actuators;
a tray carriage supported on said slideways, such that said tray carriage is capable of sliding linearly relative to said slideways between a pick-up position and an unloading position;
a first servo drive motor adapted for driving said linear actuators;
a tray carrier which is adapted to receive an open-top container of rod-like articles, said tray carrier being supported on said tray carriage, and being pivotable relative to said tray carriage through about 180° between a first position at which it

can receive an upright container at said pick-up position, and a second position at which it maintains an inverted carrier at said unloading position, said tray carrier comprising a plurality of clamps which are selectively operable for clamping a container in place on the tray carrier, and a retractable release plate that can be arranged for covering an open top of a container on the tray carrier;

a second servo drive motor for rotating said tray carrier between said first and second positions;

wherein said first and second servo drive motors are adapted to provide simultaneous, independent control of the linear movement of the tray carriage and rotational movement of the tray carrier.

31. Apparatus as claimed in claim 30, wherein said first and second servo drive motors are adapted to allow the relative rates and positions at which said linear and rotational movements take place to be varied in accordance with parameters associated with the articles in the containers.

32. Apparatus as claimed in claim 30, wherein said first servo drive motor is reversible.

33. Apparatus as claimed in claim 30, wherein said second servo drive motor is reversible.

34. Apparatus as claimed in claim 30, further comprising an empty tray conveyor for removing empty trays, and an empty tray transfer mechanism that is adapted to receive an empty tray from the tray carrier at a position intermediate said pick-up

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position and said unloading position, and deposit said empty tray on said empty tray
conveyor.